

Guiding Elder Team's Explanation of our Statement of Doctrine

For many who come to Village Bible Church and encounter our doctrinal statement for the first time, seeing theological terms and concepts can stir various reactions. For newer believers, these power-packed, succinct paragraphs may raise questions or create uncertainty about what they truly mean. For seasoned Christians and churchgoers, theological language can sometimes create confusion because terms that seem familiar can be used differently from one church to another. Additionally, we recognize that some of the most beautiful and sacred terms in our faith have, at times, been misused or weaponized in ways that have harmed rather than helped. These rich theological concepts, when misunderstood or used improperly, can lose their intended power to point us toward the glory of God and the truth of His Word.

This is why the Guiding Elders created this document—to help explain and expand upon those short yet profound statements in a way that makes them accessible to all, regardless of where they are in their faith journey. Our aim with this position paper is to alleviate these concerns by providing clarity and depth. We want to communicate our doctrinal beliefs in a way that is faithful to Scripture while ensuring that these essential truths are understood in the context of our church's teaching. While the statement itself clearly articulates our faith, we understand that some prospective and current members may desire further nuance and explanation.

The purpose of this paper is not to alter or question our commitment to the doctrinal statement but to provide additional commentary and clarity about what it does and does not say. We aim to prevent any misunderstanding or confusion about what is required of our membership. By going point by point through the doctrinal statement, this paper offers detailed explanations, ensuring that our beliefs are communicated precisely, while upholding our unwavering commitment to Scripture.

We approach this explanation with the understanding that doctrinal clarity is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the church's teaching and its witness to the world. At the same time, we recognize the importance of unity among the body of believers, allowing space for thoughtful engagement on certain matters of the faith.

Introduction:

STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE, CHRISTIAN LIVING, AND OTHER MATTERS OF BIBLICAL ETHICS

As members of Village Bible Church, we voluntarily and without reservation agree to accept these beliefs, with the express purpose of committing ourselves to the teachings of Scripture, both for our own spiritual benefit and also as a basis for our own witness before a watching world. We believe that all spiritual experiences must be based on and nurtured by the truths of Scripture.

These belief statements are rooted in Scripture and compiled from various sources, reflecting those truths we believe beneficial for personal salvation, spiritual growth, and a life lived for God's glory. All who teach for this Church do so under the authority of the Guiding Elders and are expected to advocate and not undermine the positions of the Church as stated in its Constitution. This statement of doctrine expresses what we believe the scriptures teach us about our faith. It is not meant to represent everything Scripture teaches, but rather includes what we believe are the essentials of authentic Christianity.

This statement serves as a foundational commitment for members of Village Bible Church, emphasizing the importance of aligning personal beliefs with the church's doctrinal positions. By voluntarily agreeing to these beliefs, members demonstrate a collective commitment to the teachings of Scripture, recognizing that these truths are essential for their spiritual growth and effective witness to the world. This agreement is not only about personal conviction but also about unity in the church's mission and message.

The beliefs articulated in this statement are deeply rooted in Scripture and have been carefully compiled from various theological sources to reflect the truths that are most beneficial for salvation, spiritual maturity, and living a life that glorifies God. The church underscores that all spiritual experiences and practices should be grounded in biblical truth, ensuring that members' faith is nurtured by and aligned with the teachings of the Bible. This approach highlights the church's commitment to sound doctrine and the centrality of Scripture in the life of every believer.

Furthermore, this statement clarifies the church's expectations for those who teach within its community. Under the authority of the Guiding Elders, teachers are expected to uphold and advocate for the church's doctrinal positions as outlined in its Constitution. This ensures that the teaching within the church remains consistent and faithful to the church's understanding of Scripture.

This statement of doctrine is not intended to cover every aspect of Scripture but rather to highlight the essentials we believe define authentic Christianity. It recognizes that while there are many important theological topics, we must prioritize unity around the foundational truths that are central to our salvation and spiritual life while giving liberty for other theological issues where there are differences within evangelical Christianity. This balanced approach ensures that Village Bible Church remains focused on what truly matters in the life of faith, encouraging both spiritual depth and unity.

When we speak to the idea of “authentic Christianity,” we are not suggesting that one must affirm every point of doctrine in order to be considered a true believer. Rather, this doctrinal statement represents our humble attempt at capturing what we believe the Bible teaches regarding the beliefs and practices of Christ’s followers. Like the thief on the cross, whose faith was affirmed by Jesus despite his lack of doctrinal knowledge, we recognize that adding undue theological tests to sincere believers would be unfair. Salvation is determined and granted by God alone, not based on a person’s ability to articulate every doctrinal point. Our role is to uphold what we believe Scripture reveals while leaving the final judgment of the heart to God. Our intention in this introduction is to map out the doctrinal guidelines for the curriculum and teaching/preaching ministry of VBC.

THE SCRIPTURES.

The Bible, composed of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, was written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, is God’s revelation to humanity and is our final, absolute authority, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Having been given by God Himself, the Scriptures are fully and verbally inspired. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free from error in all it teaches. Each book must be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord Who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide for all Christian practice and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation or worldly wisdom. All doctrine, whether in creed, confession or theology, must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, Who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:18-19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:25,44-45; John 5:39; 10:35b; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23,25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

We teach that the Bible is God’s written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, constitute the Word of God. We affirm the plenary verbal inspiration of

Scripture, meaning every word is equally breathed out by God in all its parts (1 Corinthians 2:7–14; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), infallible (John 10:35), and absolutely inerrant in the original documents, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit (Psalm 12:6; 119:160; Proverbs 30:5). The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, true and reliable in all matters it addresses (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12–13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

We also believe that even the miraculous and extraordinary stories found within the Bible—however far-fetched they may seem to skeptics—happened exactly as the Word says. This includes all miracles and special acts of God used for His divine purpose. Scripture stands in judgment of men; men do not stand in judgment of it. Therefore, it must not bend to popular opinion or theoretical objections from science or other worldly wisdom. Such as when the Bible teaches that God created the world in six literal twenty-four-hour days (Genesis 1:1–2:3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17), that He specially created man and woman (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:5–25), a worldwide flood and Noah building an ark (Genesis 6–9) and Jonah being swallowed by a great fish. (Jonah 1–4), a literal resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

We teach that the most important principle of biblical hermeneutics is the literal interpretation of Scripture. The Bible should be understood in its normal or plain meaning unless the passage is clearly symbolic or employs figures of speech. For instance, when Jesus speaks of having fed "the five thousand" in Mark 8:19, we should understand the number literally—there was a crowd of five thousand who were fed with real bread and fish by Jesus. Attempts to "spiritualize" or deny the literal nature of such miracles do injustice to the text. Biblical hermeneutics ensures that we remain faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and avoid allegorizing verses that should be understood literally.

A second crucial principle is interpreting passages historically, grammatically, and contextually. Historical interpretation requires understanding the cultural and situational background of the text. For example, to grasp Jonah's actions in Jonah 1:1–3, we should consider the historical context of Assyria in relation to Israel. Grammatical interpretation involves following the rules of grammar and recognizing nuances in Hebrew and Greek, such as Paul's use of "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" in Titus 2:13, where "God" and "Savior" are parallel terms referring to Jesus. Contextual interpretation means considering the immediate and broader context of a passage, including the entire book and Bible. For instance, Ecclesiastes' puzzling statements become clearer when understood as part of the book's "under the sun" perspective (Ecclesiastes 1:3).

A third principle is that Scripture interprets Scripture. Comparing passages helps clarify meanings, as illustrated by Isaiah's condemnation of Judah's reliance on Egypt (Isaiah 31:1) being informed by God's command against seeking help from Egypt (Deuteronomy 17:16).

Regarding Bible translations, we recognize different approaches in translating Scripture from the original languages. We favor translations that prioritize word-for-word accuracy (formal equivalence) over dynamic equivalence, as we believe they best preserve the original meaning of the text. While various translations can be helpful, we prefer those that maintain fidelity to the original languages for a deeper and more accurate understanding of Scripture.

We also recognize the value of historical writings such as the Apocrypha and the works of the early church fathers and creeds. These writings can bring historical context and illustrate biblical teachings but must be approached with discernment. They err at times and should not be equated with the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. They are valuable for providing examples and illustrations of biblical teachings but are not authoritative nor a part of the biblical canon.

Our approach to teaching the Bible at Village Bible Church is expositional, working through books of the Bible verse by verse. This method allows us to reveal the full message of God's Word, leading believers to a deeper understanding and application of its truths.

In conclusion, the Bible is an extraordinary gift from God, possessing a unique power to accomplish what nothing else can. It is the living Word that guides, transforms, and sustains us, offering unparalleled wisdom and truth. As we engage with Scripture, we are continually reminded of its divine authority and transformative power in our lives and in the world.

God: There is only one living and true God, Who is a spiritual and personal Being. He is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the universe. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is infinite in holiness, love and all other perfections. He is all powerful, all knowing, all wise and present everywhere. His knowledge is perfect and extends to all things, past, present and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence and obedience. The eternal and unchanging Triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

There is only one living and true God, affirming that God is the sole deity who is both alive and real, distinguishing Him from false gods. He is a spiritual and personal Being, which means He exists beyond the physical realm and engages in a personal relationship with His creation. As the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, God is responsible for bringing everything into existence, rescuing humanity, maintaining the world, and governing all things. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted, highlighting His supreme authority and the certainty that nothing can prevent the fulfillment of His will.

God is infinite in holiness, love, and all other perfections, signifying that His attributes are boundless and perfect. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, and present everywhere, indicating that His capabilities and understanding are unlimited, and He is omnipresent. His knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the free decisions of His creatures, illustrating His comprehensive awareness of all aspects of existence. God's omniscience and omnipotence mean that His foreknowledge and sovereign will are inextricably connected, ensuring that even human free will operates within His ultimate control and predetermined plan. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience, emphasizing our duty to honor and respect God above all else. The eternal and unchanging Triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes but unified in essence, representing the profound mystery of God's nature. God is not defined by our whims or ideas but is self-evident and reveals Himself through His Word, which serves as the ultimate authority for understanding His nature and will. Any divergence from this understanding brings one into heresy and outside the norms of biblical Christianity, stressing the importance of adhering to these fundamental truths to remain within orthodox belief.

The Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures and human history according to the purposes of His grace. He involves Himself mercifully in human affairs, hears and answers prayer and saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. He is faithful to every promise, in all things works for the good of those who love Him and in His unfathomable grace gave His Son Jesus Christ for our redemption.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15,28-29; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:13-15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:14-17; 1 John 5:1-4.

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, is the sovereign ruler who orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). As the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9), He is supreme in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood

encompasses both His role within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator, He is the Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), reflecting His role in the origin and sustenance of life. However, He is a spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18), emphasizing a unique relationship with those who are adopted into His family through faith. It is important to note that while God is neither male nor female, He has chosen to reveal Himself as Father, which reflects His relational attributes and authority.

The Father has decreed all things for His own glory (Ephesians 1:11), demonstrating that His eternal plans encompass everything that occurs. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11), ensuring that His sovereign will is executed throughout history. Importantly, while He is sovereign, He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38–47), nor does His sovereignty negate the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). This affirms the theological concept that God’s sovereignty does not imply causation of sin, and human responsibility remains intact. Wayne Grudem is correct when he says “It seems better to affirm that God causes all things that happen, but that he does so in such a way that he somehow upholds our ability to make willing, responsible, choices, choices that have real and eternal results, and for which we are held accountable. Exactly how God combines his providential control with our willing and significant choices, Scripture does not explain to us. But rather than deny one aspect or the other (simply because we cannot explain how both can be true), we should accept both in an attempt to be faithful to the teaching of all of Scripture.” *Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Zondervan: 1994), pg. 321-322*

In His grace, God has elected from eternity past those whom He would save (Ephesians 1:4–6), a doctrine known as election. He saves from sin all who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, highlighting the necessity of faith for salvation. Through faith, believers are adopted as God’s own children, and He becomes their spiritual Father (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5–9). This adoption signifies a profound relational change, bringing believers into a new familial relationship with God.

The Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and human history according to the purposes of His grace. His involvement in human affairs is marked by mercy; He hears and answers prayer, and He is faithful to every promise. In all things, He works for the good of those who love Him, showcasing His unwavering commitment to the welfare of His people. In His unfathomable grace, He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for our redemption, underscoring the depth of His love and the centrality of Christ’s sacrificial work in His redemptive plan.

Christ is the eternal and only Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, and in His very nature He is fully God in bodily form. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of the Father, taking upon Himself human nature and identifying Himself completely with humanity, yet without sin. In His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of human beings from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the same person Who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father, where He is the only Mediator, being fully God and fully man. Through Him believers are reconciled to God. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to bring His redemptive mission to completion.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

We teach that Jesus Christ is the eternal and only Son of God, fully God and fully man. As the second Person of the Trinity, He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father, possessing all divine perfections (John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9). This means that Jesus shares the same divine nature as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, possessing all the attributes of deity such as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. His eternal nature underscores His unchanging and everlasting existence, affirming that He is both divine and central to our understanding of God.

In His incarnation, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, thus uniting two complete and distinct natures—divine and human—in one person (Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4–5). This union of natures did not alter His divine nature or surrender any divine attributes, yet He fully embraced human nature without sin (Philippians 2:5–8; Hebrews 4:15). The incarnation demonstrates how Jesus became fully human while remaining fully divine, bridging the gap between God and humanity. This dual nature is crucial for understanding how He can mediate between God and man and fully experience human life without sin.

Jesus Christ, in His divine nature, is the eternal Son through whom all creation came into being and is sustained (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2, 17). His role as Creator affirms that He is not only involved in the initial act of creation but also in maintaining and governing all things, emphasizing His ongoing authority over the universe.

During His incarnation, while He fully possessed His divine attributes, He chose not to always express the full glory of His majesty, presenting Himself in genuine humanity (Matthew 17:2; Mark 13:32; Philippians 2:5–8). In His earthly ministry, He acted in submission to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 4:34; 5:19, 30; 6:38; Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:28), while exercising divine authority and power as the eternal Son (John 1:14; 2:11; 10:37–38; 14:10–11). This voluntary limitation of His divine glory during His earthly ministry highlights His humility and obedience. It illustrates how He chose to live among us as a servant, while still retaining His divine authority and power.

We affirm that Jesus accomplished the redemption of humanity through His sacrificial death on the cross, which was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (Isaiah 53:3–6; John 10:15, 18; Romans 3:24–25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24). His death on the cross was a deliberate act of love and sacrifice, serving as a substitute for sinners and satisfying God's justice. This act of atonement is central to the Christian faith, as it provides the basis for forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

His death provides for the forgiveness of sins, and through His resurrection, believers are assured of their justification, being declared righteous, granted eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8–9; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). The resurrection is a pivotal event that not only confirms Jesus' victory over sin and death but also guarantees the believer's future resurrection and eternal life. It marks the beginning of the new creation and validates the promises of God.

His literal, physical resurrection confirms His deity and validates His atoning work, serving as a guarantee of the future resurrection life for all believers (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38–39; Acts 2:30–31; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5–10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). The resurrection serves as proof of Jesus' divine nature and the efficacy of His redemptive work. It is also a promise to believers that they too will be raised to eternal life.

Jesus is now exalted at the right hand of the Father, where He intercedes as our Advocate and High Priest (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). His current role as our intercessor highlights His ongoing work in heaven, advocating on behalf of believers and mediating their relationship with God.

He will return to receive the church, His Body, and, upon returning with His church, establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 20). The Second Coming is a future event that completes the redemptive plan, bringing about the final establishment of God's kingdom and fulfilling the promises made in Scripture.

At His second coming, He will judge all mankind: believers, living inhabitants of the earth, and the unbelieving dead (John 5:22–23; Matthew 25:31–46; Revelation 20:11–15). As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the universal King (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31–33), He will reign on the throne of David and be the final Judge of all who have not placed their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14–46; Acts 17:30–31). Jesus' role as Judge emphasizes His ultimate authority and the finality of His role in assessing and executing divine justice. His mediatorial work, as Head of the Church, and His kingship underscore His comprehensive authority and governance over all creation.

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, is to be respected, honored and worshipped as God, the third person of the Trinity. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, He persuades people to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. He brings about the new birth, unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, baptizes them into the Body of Christ and dwells within them. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals believers for the day of redemption. His presence in believers enables them to grow in Christlikeness. He leads the Church into a right understanding and application of the truths of God's Word. He came to glorify the Son, Who in turn came to glorify the Father.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1–3; Joel 2:28–32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28–32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18–19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16–17,26; 15:26; 16:7–14; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:1–4,38; 4:31; 5:3–4; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,28,39; 10:44; 11:16–17; 13:2,4; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1–6; Romans 8:9–11,14–16,26–27; 1 Corinthians 2:10–14; 3:16; 6:19; 12:3–11,13; 2 Corinthians 3:17–18; 5:5; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6–8; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

We teach that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is eternal God, coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 13:14). The Holy Spirit possesses all the divine perfections, including eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7–10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13–14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truth (John 16:13). This means that the Holy Spirit shares the same divine nature and attributes as the Father and the Son, affirming His full divinity within the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit is not merely a force or power but a distinct divine Person who thinks (1 Corinthians 2:10–13), wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), speaks (Acts 28:25–26), and can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). This personal nature of the Holy Spirit emphasizes His role in the Trinity as an active, relational being who engages with believers and carries out God's will in the world.

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will in relation to all mankind. His sovereign activity is seen in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation of Scripture (2 Peter 1:20–21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5–7). The Holy Spirit is integral to all of God's interactions with the world, from the formation of the universe to the inspiration of the Bible, demonstrating His vital role in God's redemptive plan.

The work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:4), when He was sent by the Father and the Son as promised by Christ (John 14:16–17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is the church (Ephesians 2:22; 1:21–22). Pentecost marks the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the early church, empowering believers and establishing the church as the ongoing expression of Christ's body on earth.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11), glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:14), and transforms believers into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). This convicting and transforming work highlights the Holy Spirit's role in leading people to repentance and shaping them to reflect Christ's character.

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration (Titus 3:5), baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). He also indwells believers (Romans 8:9), sanctifies them (2 Corinthians 3:18), instructs them (1 John 2:20, 27), empowers them for service (1 Corinthians 12:4, 9), and seals them unto the day of redemption (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). These actions affirm the Holy Spirit's comprehensive work in the believer's life—from the moment of salvation through their ongoing spiritual growth and final redemption.

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they wrote God's special revelation, the Bible (John 14:26; 16:13; cf. 2 Peter 1:19–21). The inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit ensures that the Bible is the authoritative and infallible Word of God. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation (Romans 8:9), and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This indwelling presence guides believers in living out their faith in accordance with God's will.

We teach that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the church for its edification (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 14:26). Among these gifts are sign gifts, which include miracles, prophecy, and speaking in tongues.

- **Miracles:** The Holy Spirit empowers believers to perform acts that transcend natural laws, serving as signs that authenticate the message of the Gospel and demonstrate God's power. Miracles in the New Testament included healing the sick, raising the dead, and other supernatural occurrences that validated the apostolic witness (Acts 2:22; 4:30; 19:11).
- **Prophecy:** Prophecy involves receiving and communicating messages from God. In the early church, prophecy served to edify, exhort, and comfort the body of believers (1 Corinthians 14:3). Prophets in the New Testament provided revelation that was essential for the growth and direction of the early church, although this gift must always be tested against Scripture (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21).
- **Speaking in Tongues:** Speaking in tongues is the supernatural ability to speak in a language unknown to the speaker, often as a sign to unbelievers or for the edification of the church when interpreted (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:27). This gift was prominent in the early church and served as a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays (1 Corinthians 14:33), but He does glorify Christ (John 16:13–14) by applying His work of redemption to His people in regeneration and sanctification (2 Corinthians 3:18; Titus 3:5). Spiritual gifts, especially the sign gifts, should point back to Christ and His redemptive work, not to the individuals exercising them.

In regards to the Spirit's work, our church holds an open but cautious view concerning the continuation of the sign gifts. This view acknowledges that while the Holy Spirit is active and powerful, these gifts—such as miracles, prophecy, and speaking in tongues—are often seen as special movements of the Spirit rather than normative occurrences within the church today. All expressions of spiritual gifts must be tested against Scripture and practiced in a way that aligns with biblical teaching. Our position is detailed further in our distinctive on the sign gifts, where we emphasize the importance of discernment and the primacy of love and edification in the exercise of these gifts.

Humanity is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation, that they might have fellowship with Him. In the beginning, humans were innocent of sin and were endowed by their Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice, Adam rebelled against God, bringing sin into the human race. As a consequence of Adam's sin, all human beings are estranged from their Maker, yet are still responsible to Him. All people are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ. Nevertheless, because they still possess the divine image, every person of every race has full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. All humanity is subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved, and apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:7,18-22; 3:1-24; 9:6; Psalms 1:1-6; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:12-18; 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

In our journey of faith, it is essential to grasp the foundational truths about our creation, fall, and redemption. At the heart of our beliefs is the concept of the Imago Dei—the Image of God—in which all humans are created. This divine imprint marks every individual with inherent worth and sets the stage for our relationships with God and each other. However, the fall of humanity through Adam introduced sin into the world, a catastrophic event that has tainted every aspect of human nature. This pervasive impact of sin leaves us in a state of spiritual helplessness, unable to reconcile with God through our own efforts. In response to our fallen condition, God provided the ultimate solution through Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection offer redemption and restore the possibility of regaining the fullness of our creation in God's image.

Humanity was directly and immediately created by God as His crowning achievement. Each person is made in God's own image and likeness, as described in Genesis 1:26-30 and Genesis 2:7, 15-25. This divine image imparts attributes such as rationality, creativity, and relationality—qualities that mirror the character of God Himself. This foundational belief bestows inherent dignity and worth upon every individual, compelling us to uphold the Christian command to treat all people with respect and love.

From creation, humans were designed distinctly as male or female—each biologically and divinely determined at conception, highlighted in Genesis 1:27 and Psalm 139:13-14. This binary and complementary design is part of God's perfect plan for human identity and relationships. Attempts to alter or confuse these God-given distinctions are considered contrary to divine order, as stated in Leviticus 18:22 and Romans 1:26-27.

God created humans free from sin, with a moral responsibility to obey and glorify Him. Humanity's ultimate purpose was to glorify God, enjoy His fellowship, and live according to His will, affirming truths found in Isaiah 43:7 and Colossians 1:16. However, through Adam's sin of disobedience in Genesis 3:1-24, sin was introduced into the human race, corrupting nature and severing the perfect relationship with God. This hereditary sin brought about spiritual and physical death, subjected humanity to God's wrath, and left mankind unable to return to God without divine intervention, as detailed in Romans 5:12, 18-19 and John 3:36.

Given humanity's total inability to save itself, as further explained in Romans 3:23 and Ephesians 2:1-3, salvation is entirely a work of divine grace. It cannot be earned or achieved through human efforts but is a gift freely offered by God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This underscores the necessity of faith for reconciliation and restoration with God, highlighting the transformative power of grace in a believer's life.

Despite the fall and the pervasiveness of sin, every person still retains the image of God and thus maintains inherent worth. This understanding calls for ongoing Christian love and respect for all people, underlining the essential truths about humanity's need for God's grace and the universal offer of salvation.

While the doctrine of total depravity is widely upheld by most evangelical Christians, the elders recognize that interpretations of what total depravity entails can vary significantly. Total depravity generally refers to the belief that every aspect of human nature has been corrupted by sin as a result of the fall, rendering humans incapable of turning towards God for salvation without divine intervention. Scriptural backing for this includes passages such as Romans 3:10-18, which underscores the universal lack of righteousness and the absence of seeking God; Ephesians 2:1-3, depicting humanity as dead in sins; and Jeremiah 17:9, which speaks to the deceitful and desperately sick condition of the human heart.

The term "total depravity" suggests not that individuals are as morally corrupt as possible but that sin affects all parts of one's being. This theological position asserts that humans are spiritually dead and cannot choose to follow God or accept salvation on their own. However, there is considerable debate over the extent of this incapacity. Some believe that total depravity means that humans, though fallen, can exhibit faith through God's prevenient or enabling grace. Others argue that humans are utterly incapable of pursuing God without the regenerating work of God's grace, which then allows them to respond in faith.

For the sake of unity and clarity in teaching, the elders will instruct from the perspective that depravity is so pervasive that it necessitates God's regenerating work for humans to exhibit faith leading to salvation. This stance is rooted in the belief that divine grace is not influenced by human effort but is a sovereign gift that efficaciously brings individuals to faith in Christ.

However, when it comes to church membership, individuals are asked to affirm the doctrine of total depravity in its broadest sense: recognizing that their sin prevents them from achieving salvation independently and acknowledging that in Adam's fall, all humanity fell. Membership is granted to all who can accept this foundational view of human sinfulness and the necessity of divine grace for salvation. Understanding total depravity leads to a humility that recognizes a constant need for divine grace. Believers are encouraged to depend on the Holy Spirit for sanctification—the process of becoming more Christ-like. This understanding shapes every aspect of a believer's life and fosters a culture of grace within the church community.

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In its broadest sense salvation includes election, regeneration, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; Romans 1:16; 10:9-10,13; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; Colossians 1:9-22; Hebrews 5:8-9; 9:24-28.

We have such a great salvation in Jesus Christ, and it fills us with immense joy to dedicate ourselves to sharing this good news and thanking God for the gift He freely offers to all. The gospel is proclaimed to the world without exclusion, offering salvation to anyone willing to repent and believe. This highlights God's grace and His desire that no one should perish. Yet, while this offer is made to all, only those who receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior will experience the full blessings and benefits of salvation.

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and includes distinct acts such as election, regeneration, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. By understanding these distinct acts of salvation, we recognize all that God is doing in and through us, and we avoid reducing salvation to something less than it truly is. Each stage reveals His purposeful care and eternal commitment to His people. It also clearly communicates to us what God desires for us to do as we, with greater maturity and Christlikeness, embrace and endeavor to honor and glorify Him for all He has done. As we rejoice in this great salvation, we are called to proclaim the gospel boldly, knowing that while the invitation is universal, the experience of salvation's blessings is exclusive to those who believe. Let us give thanks for this incredible gift and commit ourselves to spreading the message of Christ's redeeming love to the world.

Election is the gracious purpose of God, settled before the foundation of the world, as the basis on which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. Election is consistent with the free agency of human beings and is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

Election is an important biblical teaching that shows us God's sovereign plan for salvation. Throughout the Bible, in passages like Genesis 12:1-3, Romans 8:29-30, and Ephesians 1:4-14, we see God calling and choosing people to be His

own, not based on anything they have done, but because of His grace and purpose. This idea of God choosing to save people is a theme repeated over and over, reminding us that salvation is ultimately God's work. As Romans 8:30 says, 'And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified,' showing how election is tied to the totality of our salvation from start to finish.

Calvinists view election as God's unconditional choice made before the foundation of the world, independent of human actions. They believe that God's election is the foundation of salvation, and that He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies those He has chosen. In contrast, Arminians understand election as conditional, based on God's foreknowledge of who would respond to His call in faith. For Arminians, God's election respects human free will and allows for real choices in response to His grace.

We recognize that believers may debate the exact way election works—how it intersects with human free will and other theological concepts. The purpose of this statement is not to dive into that debate but to affirm what the Bible clearly teaches: that election is real and is a key part of God's plan for saving sinners. What's most important is that we trust in God's gracious election, which brings about our salvation, and that we humbly accept His work in our lives, knowing that it leaves no room for boasting.

At Village Bible Church, the expectation for members is not to take one side of the debate over the other but to embrace election as part of the beautiful picture of the totality of our salvation, as Romans 8 speaks of. While members are not asked to affirm one position over another, the official teaching position of Village Bible Church aligns more closely with the Calvinistic understanding of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, this perspective should never become a tool for division or diminish the great mystery of these deep theological themes.

As we teach and discuss the doctrine of election, we commit to doing so with charity, humility, and a deep respect for those who hold to different perspectives. We believe that all members of our church should feel valued and respected, regardless of their stance on this issue.. By maintaining this approach, we keep our focus on the clear message of the gospel and its transformative power in our lives, ensuring that our discussions build up the body of Christ in love, rather than causing division."

Regeneration, or the new birth, is the work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration is not the result of water baptism or of any outward ritual. It is a change of heart brought about by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, in which sinners respond in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. And true biblical faith means more than simply believing certain facts. It means accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and committing one's entire being to Him as Lord. It calls for a total response involving the believer's mind, emotions and will. Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Ezekiel 11:19; John 1:12-14; 3:3ff.; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Eph. 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3.

All Christians affirm the biblical concept of regeneration as an essential part of the process by which God saves people. However, there is significant debate on two key issues that our doctrinal statement addresses. The first involves the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) and the timing of regeneration. Some of our members hold that regeneration precedes faith (i.e., that a person is born again by the Holy Spirit before they can exercise saving faith in Christ). Others believe that regeneration follows faith (i.e., that a person must first believe in Christ, and then they are regenerated). Village Bible Church members are not required to adhere to a specific order; instead, they are asked to affirm that both faith and regeneration are necessary elements of salvation, without needing to take a definitive stance on the precise timing or sequence.

However, it is important for our leadership to present a unified understanding of our teaching position. While we acknowledge the biblical perspective that faith precedes regeneration, we find stronger biblical evidence for the view that regeneration precedes faith. This position arises from our understanding of total depravity. We also recognize that many of our members may not be familiar with these theological concepts and that a detailed understanding of them is not essential for evangelism. Therefore, this will not be a major emphasis in our teaching. Instead, it will serve as a theological guide for those seeking a more nuanced understanding.

The second area of disagreement concerns the role of repentance in salvation and the timing of when and how repentance must occur. This debate gained significant attention among evangelicals in the 1980s, particularly through the writings and teachings of two prominent figures: John MacArthur and Zane Hodges.

John MacArthur, a leading advocate of the Lordship position, argued that true saving faith always includes repentance—a turning away from sin that demonstrates a genuine commitment to Christ as Lord. MacArthur's view holds that repentance is not merely an optional add-on but is essential to salvation, intertwining with faith to form the foundation of a believer's relationship with Christ. Saving faith will always and inevitably result in a transformed life of good works, obedience, and following Christ. Spiritual growth is greatly dependent on discipleship, but even an un-disciplined believer will exhibit some spiritual fruit. It is not possible for believers to remain in a carnal state for their entire lives.

On the other side of the debate, Zane Hodges championed the Free Grace position, emphasizing that salvation is by faith alone, without the necessity of repentance being a prerequisite for receiving eternal life. Saving faith in Christ does not necessarily result in a life of good works, obedience, and following Christ. Spiritual growth, obedience to God's Word, and a transformed life are greatly dependent on discipleship. It is possible for believers to remain in a carnal state for their entire lives.

Hodges argued that repentance, understood as turning from sin, is not a condition for salvation but a separate act that may follow faith. He contended that adding repentance as a requirement could potentially undermine the doctrine of grace and lead to a works-based understanding of salvation.

This debate highlighted a broader theological discussion within evangelical circles about the nature of faith, repentance, and their roles in the process of salvation, shaping how many Christians understand and articulate these essential aspects of their faith. While these positions differ in their understanding, it's important to recognize that both camps are motivated by a deep desire to uphold key biblical truths. Both the free grace and lordship camps are deeply committed to living out the Scriptures in their respective emphases.

The free grace movement seeks to highlight the foundational truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, as clearly stated in Ephesians 2:8-9. This camp insists that nothing should be added to faith as a requirement for salvation, resonating with the simplicity and clarity of passages like John 3:16 and Acts 16:31.

On the other hand, the lordship salvation perspective underscores the transformative power of that same grace, emphasizing that true faith inevitably results in good works, as seen in Ephesians 2:10. This view aligns with the biblical teaching that the Christian life involves a progressive sanctification, where the believer grows in producing less of the acts of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) and more of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). While free grace seeks to affirm that justification is by faith alone (Romans 5:1), lordship salvation asserts that genuine faith is evidenced by works (James 2:14-26).

Both perspectives, though distinct, share a common desire to faithfully live out the teachings of Scripture in the life of a believer. The Free Grace position seeks to safeguard the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, ensuring that the grace of

God is freely available to all who believe. The Lordship position, on the other hand, aims to preserve the doctrine of God's sovereignty, emphasizing that salvation is entirely a work of God from start to finish.

While our doctrinal statement more closely reflects the tenets of the Lordship position, it has not kept us from fellowship and partnership with believers who hold to the Free Grace position. We have and continue to engage in fellowship and partnerships with camps, para church ministries, and even supported missionaries with whom we stand in solidarity on the gospel, even if they differ with our doctrinal position on this secondary issue. We also recognize that even some of our members have, for the sake of unity and greater mission, acknowledge this position while differing with it in some measure. We appreciate and thank the willingness of these members to seek unity over division and only ask that they simply abide by this more collective belief within any teaching experience. To that end, the elders want to bring clarity and understanding to our teaching perspective in light of the statement of doctrine:

Regeneration is a fundamental transformation that occurs within a person when they become a believer in Christ. It is entirely a work of God's grace, not something that can be achieved through human effort, ritual, or merit (Ezekiel 11:19). This transformation involves becoming a new creature in Christ, with a new heart, new desires, and a new direction in life (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration. His work involves convicting individuals of their sin, bringing them to repentance, and enabling them to place their faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:3ff). This new birth is not dependent on water baptism or any outward ritual but is an inward, spiritual transformation (Titus 3:5).

In line with our lordship position our staff will teach two key points: First, repentance is more than just feeling sorry for sin; it is a profound change of mind and heart that results in a turning away from sin and a turning toward God (Jeremiah 31:31ff; Ezekiel 11:19). This response is part of the process of regeneration, where the Holy Spirit convicts the sinner of their need for God's forgiveness and helps them to truly repent.

Second, true faith goes beyond merely believing certain facts about Jesus or acknowledging His existence. It involves a total commitment to Him as Savior and Lord, encompassing the whole person—mind, emotions, and will (John 1:12-14). True faith manifests in a life that seeks to follow Jesus in all things (Ephesians 2:1-10; Galatians 6:15).

The response to regeneration and the new birth involves the whole person. A believer's mind is engaged in understanding the truths of the gospel; their emotions are stirred by the love and grace of God; and their will is committed to following Christ as Lord. This total response is necessary for true discipleship and is the evidence of a genuine new birth (1 Peter 1:3). This transformative process allows believers to experience the fullness of life in Christ, walking in repentance, faith, and obedience to Him. The benefits of regeneration are manifold: it grants us a new identity in Christ, empowers us to live holy lives, and assures us of our eternal relationship with God. It is a gift that unites all believers, regardless of our theological differences, under the banner of God's amazing grace.

Justification is the act of God by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins and confess Him as Lord. It is granted apart from any human virtue or good works and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ and of His righteousness to us. Genesis 15:6; Luke 24:44-48; John 3:16; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Rom. 1:17; 3:21-28; 4:1-25; 5:1, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:24.

This foundational doctrine of the Protestant Evangelical faith underscores that our right standing before God is based solely on the righteousness of Christ, which is credited to us by faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 3:21-28; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

In Protestant Evangelical theology, justification involves the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. This means that Christ's righteousness is credited to the believer's account, even though the believer is still a sinner. It is a legal

declaration where God views the believer as righteous because of Christ's perfect obedience and sacrificial death. This imputed righteousness is the sole basis of our justification before God (Romans 4:1-5).

In contrast, Roman Catholic theology teaches that justification involves the infusion of grace into the soul. According to this view, God's grace is infused into the believer, enabling them to become inherently righteous over time. Justification, in this sense, is both a process and a state, where the believer must cooperate with grace through good works and the sacraments to maintain and increase their righteousness.

As Protestant Evangelicals, we firmly hold to the doctrine of imputed righteousness. We believe that justification is a once-for-all declaration by God, grounded in the righteousness of Christ alone. This means that the believer's right standing before God is not based on any inherent righteousness or good works but solely on Christ's righteousness, credited to us by faith (Philippians 3:9). This belief is central to the Protestant understanding of the gospel and the assurance of salvation.

At the heart of our understanding of justification is the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. This doctrine teaches that Christ took upon Himself the punishment for our sins, satisfying the demands of God's justice. By bearing the penalty for our sins, Christ secured the legal basis for our justification.

- **Penal:** This term refers to the punishment that is due to sin. God's justice requires that sin be punished, and Christ, in His death, bore that punishment on behalf of sinners (Isaiah 53:5-6).
- **Substitutionary:** This term emphasizes that Christ died in our place. He was our substitute, taking the punishment that we deserved (1 Peter 3:18).
- **Atonement:** Through His death, Christ made atonement for our sins, reconciling us to God (Romans 5:10-11).

As Protestants, hold that this doctrine is essential to understanding how God can be both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26). Our justification is not based on anything we have done but on what Christ has done for us. His death fully satisfied God's justice, allowing God to justly declare us righteous.

Within Protestant theology, there is an ongoing debate regarding the extent of the atonement, particularly between the concepts of universal atonement and limited atonement.

- **Universal Atonement:** This view holds that Christ's atonement was made for all people, meaning that He died for the sins of every person. However, while the atonement is sufficient for all, it becomes effective only for those who believe. This position emphasizes the universal offer of the gospel and the love of God for all humanity (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2).
- **Limited Atonement:** Also known as particular redemption, this view asserts that Christ's atonement was specifically intended for the elect—those whom God has chosen for salvation. According to this view, Christ's death effectively secured the salvation of the elect and was not merely a potential atonement for all. This position emphasizes the intentionality and efficacy of Christ's atoning work (John 10:14-15; Ephesians 5:25).

The atonement of Christ is a central doctrine in Christian theology, addressing how Christ's sacrifice reconciled God and humanity. The debate over whether Christ's atonement is limited or unlimited centers on whether Jesus died for all people or only for those chosen by God. Those who advocate for unlimited atonement, often aligned with Arminian theology, believe that Christ's death was for everyone, regardless of whether they would eventually believe. In contrast, Calvinists argue that Christ's atonement was specifically for the elect—those whom God had predestined for salvation.

Scripture provides support for both perspectives, but the key issue lies in understanding how the atonement is "limited." Universalism, the belief that everyone will be saved, is refuted by numerous biblical passages that clearly indicate not all will attain salvation. Therefore, both theological camps agree that the atonement is limited to those who believe. The disagreement arises over who limits the atonement: God or man. Calvinists maintain that God limits it by choosing the elect, while Arminians argue that humans limit it through their response to the gospel.

Village Bible Church's doctrinal statement does not take a definitive position on this theological point, allowing room for both views within our fellowship. This approach creates unity among believers while acknowledging the complexity and depth of this doctrine. While there is significant debate on the extent of the atonement, it is the teaching position of Village Bible Church to take a balanced approach. We acknowledge the scriptures that speak to the unlimited nature of Christ's atonement, affirming that it is sufficient to save all. However, as a teaching position, we are also convicted by the scriptural arguments that Christ's atonement has a particular efficacy, specifically intended to save believers—those who place their faith in Him. This underscores the unity of the Trinity in salvation: the Father calls, the Son redeems, and the Holy Spirit regenerates, ensuring that Christ's atonement effectively accomplishes the salvation of believers.

Justification is a triumphant declaration of God's grace, rooted in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, we are freed from the penalty of sin and declared righteous before a holy God—not by our own merits, but solely by Christ's imputed righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:21-28). We rejoice in the certainty of our justification, which assures us of peace with God and the hope of eternal life (Romans 5:1; John 3:16). Christ's sacrifice was not just an act of love but the very means by which we are reconciled to God (1 Peter 3:18). In Him, we stand forgiven, cleansed, and fully accepted by God (Acts 13:39; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Let us live in the joy and freedom of this truth, with hearts full of gratitude to our Savior, whose sacrifice has secured our justification forever (Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:1).

Sanctification is the ongoing experience, beginning with regeneration, by which believers are set apart for God's purposes and are enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in them. Growth in grace should continue throughout the believer's life.

John 17:17,19; Acts 20:32; Romans 6:1-23; 8:1-17; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:19-20; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 12:14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:13-16, 22; 1 John 1:6-2:1

Sanctification is distinct from justification. Justification is a one-time legal declaration where God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer (Romans 5:1; 3:21-28), whereas sanctification is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, making them holy and conforming them to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29-30).

The phrase "set apart for God's purposes" highlights the idea that sanctification involves a consecration to God's will and service. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul refers to believers as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," emphasizing that sanctification is about being set apart by God for holy purposes. This setting apart is not just positional but also practical, as it involves living a life that reflects God's holiness and purposes (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

The statement continues, "and are enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity." This aligns with the understanding that sanctification is a progressive work. It is not instantaneous perfection but a gradual growth in grace and holiness throughout the believer's life (Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Peter 3:18). This progress is enabled by the Holy Spirit, who works in believers to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25) and to conform them to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). The call to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) reflects this ongoing journey toward maturity.

The statement rightly emphasizes that this progress is "through the power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in them." The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of sanctification, working within believers to will and to act according to God's good purpose (Philippians 2:12-13). Sanctification is initiated and sustained by the Spirit, but believers are also called to actively participate in the process by putting to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13) and living according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4).

The final part of the statement, "Growth in grace should continue throughout the believer's life," emphasizes that sanctification is a lifelong journey that will continue until the believer is glorified in the presence of God (Philippians 1:6). This growth in grace is characterized by an increasing love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39), a deepening understanding of God's Word (Colossians 3:16), and a greater conformity to the character of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).

We affirm that sanctification is a work of God's grace, carried out by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. While sanctification requires the believer's active participation, it is ultimately God who initiates and sustains this process (Philippians 2:13). Sanctification begins at regeneration and continues throughout the believer's life, culminating in glorification (Romans 8:30).

We recognize that within the body of Christ, there are different understandings of the mechanics of sanctification. Therefore, we call our members to affirm the broader sense of sanctification as an ongoing process of growth in grace and holiness, enabled by the Holy Spirit. This approach allows for unity within the church while respecting diverse theological backgrounds (Romans 14:1-4).

Sanctification is a vital aspect of the Christian life, reflecting the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to conform believers to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we grow in grace, we are set apart for God's purposes, enabled by the Spirit to progress in holiness and spiritual maturity. Our commitment to this understanding of sanctification does not preclude the inclusion of members who may hold different views, as long as we all affirm the essential truth that sanctification is an ongoing, Spirit-empowered process that continues throughout the believer's life.

Perseverance to endure to the end is promised to all true believers. Those whom God has accepted in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit will never fall away from the state of grace, but will persevere to the very end of their earthly lives. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, thereby grieving the Spirit, bringing reproach to the cause of Christ and coming under the Lord's discipline. Nevertheless, God's promise is sure: He who began the work of salvation will be faithful to see it through to completion. John 10:27-29; Romans 8:28-39; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10, 19; Hebrews 11:39–12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19.

The doctrine of perseverance, often referred to as the perseverance of the saints, is a tenet in Christian theology, particularly within the context of salvation. The statement provided affirms that perseverance to endure to the end is promised to all true believers. This is rooted in the belief that God's saving work in an individual's life is not only initiated by Him but is also sustained and brought to completion by His power. As Jesus declares in John 10:27-29, His sheep hear His voice, and they follow Him, and He promises that they will never perish and no one can snatch them out of His hand. This assurance is echoed by Paul in Philippians 1:6, where he expresses confidence that "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Romans 8:28-39 further supports this, describing the unbreakable chain of salvation—from predestination to glorification—and assuring that nothing can separate believers from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The understanding of perseverance, however, varies among different Christian traditions. In Roman Catholic theology, perseverance in grace is necessary for final salvation, but it is not guaranteed. Catholics believe that while God provides grace for perseverance, believers must cooperate with that grace through participation in the sacraments, good works, and ongoing faithfulness. However, it is possible for a believer to commit mortal sin and fall from grace, thereby losing their

salvation. This perspective is contrasted with the Arminian view, which also holds that salvation is conditional and that a true believer can fall away and lose their salvation. Arminian theology emphasizes human free will in the process of salvation and sanctification, and while God's grace is necessary for perseverance, it is ultimately up to the individual to remain faithful, as highlighted in 2 Peter 1:10, where believers are exhorted to "make every effort to confirm your calling and election."

In contrast, the Calvinist view, which aligns closely with the position articulated in the statement, teaches that those whom God has accepted in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit are secure in their salvation. This view is rooted in the belief that God's sovereign grace ensures that true believers will inevitably persevere in faith until the end. As Paul asserts in 2 Timothy 1:12, he is confident that "He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me." Similarly, 1 Peter 1:3-5 speaks of a living hope and an inheritance that is imperishable, kept in heaven for believers who, "by God's power," are being guarded through faith for salvation. According to this perspective, while believers may stumble and fall into sin, they will never completely fall away because God preserves them in their faith.

It's important to note that the doctrines of perseverance of the saints and eternal security are often used interchangeably, but they have subtle differences. Eternal security refers to the belief that once a person is truly saved, they can never lose their salvation, regardless of how they live after their conversion. This concept is often associated with the idea of "once saved, always saved." On the other hand, perseverance of the saints emphasizes that true believers will continue in faith and holiness throughout their lives, and that their perseverance is evidence of God's preserving grace. While eternal security focuses on the assurance of salvation, perseverance of the saints includes the ongoing work of sanctification, where true believers demonstrate their salvation by enduring in faith and obedience. Together, eternal security and perseverance serve as two brothers of biblical truth surrounding our salvation's safety and security as we live our lives awaiting our glorification in the world to come.

The statement also acknowledges that believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, thereby grieving the Holy Spirit and bringing reproach to the cause of Christ. This is a sobering reminder that, although true believers are secure in their salvation, they are not immune to the consequences of sin. Hebrews 12:6 emphasizes that "the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives," indicating that when believers fall into sin, they may come under the Lord's discipline. James 1:12 encourages believers to remain steadfast under trial, promising that those who do so will "receive the crown of life," which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Despite the reality of sin and the need for discipline, the statement concludes with a powerful assurance: God's promise is sure, and He who began the work of salvation will be faithful to see it through to completion. This assurance is grounded in passages like Hebrews 11:39–12:2, which encourages believers to run the race with endurance, looking to Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith." This doctrine of perseverance provides a profound sense of security and encouragement to all who trust in Jesus, affirming that God will never abandon His work in them but will bring it to full completion.

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed state of the redeemed as they abide in God's presence for all eternity. Matthew 13:43; Romans 8:18-23, 30; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:4; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 John 3:2.

Glorification is described as the culmination of salvation, meaning it is the final and complete fulfillment of God's redemptive work in the lives of believers. Throughout Scripture, glorification is presented as the ultimate goal and the final stage in the believer's journey of salvation. This stage is not only the conclusion of the process of sanctification but also the moment when believers are fully transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. As Paul writes in Romans 8:30, those whom God predestined, called, and justified, He also glorified. This sequence shows that glorification is an integral part of God's salvific plan, one that He initiates and brings to completion.

Glorification is also described as the final blessed state of the redeemed, where they will abide in God's presence for all eternity. This eternal state is characterized by the complete and perfect restoration of believers, both physically and spiritually. Unlike some popular notions of the afterlife that suggest a disembodied existence, biblical glorification is not about becoming mere spirits floating in an ethereal realm. Instead, Scripture teaches that in glorification, believers will receive renewed, resurrected bodies. In Philippians 3:21, Paul speaks of the transformation of our lowly bodies to be like Christ's glorious body, indicating that in glorification, believers will be given new, resurrected bodies that are free from sin, suffering, and death. Similarly, 1 John 3:2 promises that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. This emphasizes that glorification involves both the renewal of our physical bodies and a full, intimate knowledge of God, as we dwell in His presence forever.

The statement concludes with the profound truth that in glorification, the redeemed will abide in God's presence for all eternity with renewed, resurrected bodies. This eternal communion with God is the ultimate fulfillment of the believer's hope and the final realization of God's promises. In Colossians 3:4, Paul states that when Christ, who is our life, appears, then we also will appear with Him in glory. This glorious future is further described in 1 Peter 5:1, where Peter refers to himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed. The promise of glorification assures believers that their ultimate destiny is to dwell in the unmediated presence of God, experiencing the fullness of joy and the perfection of all that God has intended for them.

In contrast to certain beliefs held by other religious systems, such as reincarnation or the idea of becoming gods ruling over our own planets, glorification is distinctly different. Reincarnation, which teaches that souls are reborn into new bodies or forms across different lifetimes, is incompatible with the biblical teaching on glorification. The Bible teaches that "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27), emphasizing that there is one life, one death, and then eternity, either in God's presence or separated from Him. Similarly, the Mormon teaching that suggests faithful followers will become gods and rule over their own planets is also at odds with the biblical concept of glorification. The Bible consistently teaches that glorification involves being made like Christ, not becoming a god in our own right. In our glorified state, we will be perfected and enjoy the fullness of life in God's presence, but we will not attain divinity or rule over our own worlds. Instead, we will reign with Christ (Revelation 22:5) in the new heaven and new earth, fully united with Him in a relationship of worship and service.

As articulated in the statement, our position is that glorification is the culmination of salvation and the final blessed state of the redeemed. We affirm that this glorification includes the full transformation of the believer, both body and soul, into the likeness of Christ. This transformation is not merely an improvement or enhancement of our current state but a complete renewal that is free from the presence and effects of sin (Philippians 3:21). We believe that glorification will occur at the return of Christ when all believers will be resurrected and given glorified bodies, allowing them to live in perfect communion with God for all eternity. As Scripture states in Matthew 13:43, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." Additionally, 2 Corinthians 4:17 assures us that "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison," and Romans 8:18-23 underscores the future glory that will be revealed in us, noting that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed.

THE CHURCH.

All who come to Jesus Christ in faith are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church, the bride of Christ, of which Christ is the Head. The Father by His Word and Spirit creates the church, calling sinful people into the fellowship of Christ's body. And by the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that newly redeemed humanity.

The universal church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, it is made up of all those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ. The church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth. This involves a commitment to see the Gospel preached and churches multiplying throughout the world. The ultimate mission of the church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the Gospel. As God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women should, through baptism, enter into the fellowship of a local church in which they devote themselves to learning, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer. In this context, they are called to live out the New Covenant as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom of God. The church's members are to work together in love and unity, exercising their spiritual gifts, intent on fulfilling the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ. Matthew 16:18; 18:17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 14:26; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

This statement emphasizes the profound and immediate transformation that occurs when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ. Upon believing, they are placed by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ, the church. This body is not a mere human institution but a divinely created fellowship, with Christ as its Head. The Father, through His Word and Spirit, calls individuals out of their sinful state into this new community, where they are guided and preserved as part of God's redeemed people. This understanding underscores the church as a living, spiritual entity created and sustained by God.

The universal church is described not as a denomination or religious organization, but as a collective of all genuine followers of Christ across the world. Its primary purpose is to worship and glorify the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and to carry out His will on earth. This mission involves the preaching of the Gospel and the multiplication of churches globally, with the ultimate goal of making disciples. The transformation of individuals through the Gospel is seen as the primary means by which society itself is transformed, highlighting the church's role in God's redemptive plan for humanity.

Upon conversion, believers are called to publicly identify with the church through baptism, marking their entrance into the fellowship of a local congregation. In this community, they devote themselves to the teachings of Scripture, fellowship with other believers, the observance of the Lord's Supper, and prayer. As they live out the New Covenant together, they are to reflect the reality of God's Kingdom. The church is a unified body where members work together in love, exercising their spiritual gifts, and focusing on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ. This vision of the church as a living, active body of believers underscores the importance of both individual and corporate commitment to the mission of God.

Membership in Village Bible Church, while not explicitly mandated in Scripture, is essential for defining who is part of this community. It provides clarity for church leaders, particularly elders, in knowing whom they are responsible for shepherding, as emphasized in Hebrews 13:17, where leaders are called to keep watch over the souls entrusted to them.

Membership also plays a crucial role in the orderly functioning and decision-making processes of the church. Members, who have publicly affirmed their faith and commitment to the church's mission, are involved in significant decisions, such as the selection of leaders and the direction of ministry. This involvement ensures that Village Bible Church operates with collective wisdom and discernment, reflecting the values and teachings of Christ. Furthermore, membership fosters a sense of belonging and accountability within the church. It provides a framework for mutual encouragement and challenge, helping members grow in their faith and live lives worthy of the gospel.

In our ecclesiology, we affirm that Village Bible Church is led by a plurality of elders, reflecting the New Testament model where churches were overseen by a group of qualified leaders (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7). These elders are responsible for shepherding the flock, teaching sound doctrine, and providing spiritual oversight. The leadership structure is communal rather than hierarchical, with each elder sharing in the responsibility and authority of guiding the church.

This approach ensures that the church is led in a way that honors Christ, who is the true Head of the church. Unlike Roman Catholicism, which is governed by a pope, or certain denominations that are governed by a central authority, Village Bible Church is autonomous and self-governing under the authority of Christ, guided by the elders who are accountable to the congregation and to one another.

Additionally, our understanding of the church allows for a multisite expression, where multiple congregations are interconnected under a unified leadership structure. This model mirrors the early church, where different local gatherings were interconnected and operated under the same apostolic authority. In a multisite church, local elders and pastors lead individual congregations while remaining connected to the broader church body, working together to fulfill the church's mission. This interconnectedness allows for a shared vision and mission, ensuring that all congregations are aligned in their purpose of glorifying God and making disciples.

Angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than humanity, they are created to serve God, to worship Him, and to care for those who will inherit salvation.

Satan, originally the greatest of the angels, rebelled against God, taking with him a host of angels (also referred to in Scripture as demons). He was cast out of God's presence and, as a usurper of God's authority, he established a counter-kingdom of darkness and evil. He is the "father of lies" and the great deceiver. Therefore Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and of humanity. He is the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although he presently controls all the powers of darkness, he will be punished eternally in the lake of fire. Genesis 3:1-15; Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 4:1-11; 25:41; Luke 2:9-14; 10:18; John 10:10; 12:31; 16:11; Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-17; Colossians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 1:6-7,14; 2:6-7,14; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 5:11-14; 12:1-14; 19:10; 20:2,10.

Angels are created beings, fashioned by God to serve specific purposes within His divine plan. As such, they are not to be worshiped, despite being a higher order of creation than humanity. This distinction is critical; although angels possess great power and are often seen performing mighty acts in Scripture, they remain creatures of God, bound by His authority and will. Their primary roles include serving God, worshiping Him, and ministering to those who will inherit salvation. Hebrews 1:14 affirms this, describing angels as "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation." Throughout the Bible, angels are depicted as messengers of God, bringing His word to His people, as seen in Luke 2:9-14, where angels announce the birth of Christ, and in Matthew 4:11, where they minister to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness.

In addition to their role as messengers and ministers, angels also engage in spiritual warfare on behalf of God's people. Ephesians 6:12 speaks of a spiritual battle against "the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Angels are on the front lines of this battle, executing God's judgment against His enemies and protecting His people from spiritual harm. The book of Revelation provides vivid imagery of angelic beings participating in the ultimate defeat of evil, culminating in the victory of God's kingdom (Revelation 12:7-9; 19:11-14). However, despite their power and their critical role in God's plan, angels are never to be worshiped. Revelation 19:10 highlights this when the apostle John, overwhelmed by the presence of an angel, is told, "Worship God!"—a reminder that even these magnificent beings are fellow servants in God's grand design.

In stark contrast to the holy angels, Scripture also speaks of Satan and his demons. Satan, originally created as the greatest of the angels, rebelled against God, becoming the leader of a host of fallen angels who are now referred to as demons. Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 describe Satan's fall, driven by pride and a desire to usurp God's authority. As a result of his rebellion, Satan was cast out of God's presence, taking with him a multitude of angels who joined him in his rebellion. These fallen angels now serve Satan in his counter-kingdom of darkness and evil. They are actively opposed to

God's purposes and seek to deceive and destroy humanity, as reflected in John 10:10, where Jesus describes Satan's mission as one of theft, death, and destruction.

Satan is depicted in Scripture as the "father of lies" and the great deceiver (John 8:44). He is the prince of this world, wielding significant influence over the powers of darkness. 2 Corinthians 4:4 describes him as "the god of this age" who blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel. Yet, despite his power, Satan is a defeated foe. His defeat was secured through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as Colossians 2:15 declares, "having disarmed the powers and authorities, [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." While Satan continues to wage war against God's people, his ultimate fate is sealed; he will be eternally punished in the lake of fire, as described in Revelation 20:10.

The ministry of angels and demons, including Satan, underscores the ongoing spiritual battle that takes place beyond the visible realm. Angels, as God's servants, are engaged in carrying out His will and protecting His people, while demons, under Satan's leadership, seek to oppose God and lead humanity astray. Despite the real and present danger posed by Satan and his forces, believers are called to stand firm in their faith, relying on the armor of God for protection, as outlined in Ephesians 6:10-17. This passage emphasizes the need for spiritual vigilance, urging believers to take up the "shield of faith" and the "sword of the Spirit" to resist the enemy's attacks.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST.

At a time known only to God, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven, and all believers – both those who have died in Christ and those who are still alive – will meet Him in the air. This hope produces in us a sense of constant expectancy and motivates us to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Every human being who has ever lived will one day be raised bodily from the dead. In judgment and condemnation, unbelievers will be consigned to eternal conscious punishment in hell, while believers will enter into eternal blessedness and joy. In the new heaven and the new earth, Christ's Kingdom will come to full fruition as the redeemed, in gloriously renewed bodies, dwell with Him forever, serving Him, reigning with Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 8:12; 10:28; 13:49-50; 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:34; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:5,40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; 23:42; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1,8,10; Philippians 1:23; 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7-13; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 6-7,14; Revelation 1:8; 2:7; 3:11; 19:16; 20:1-22:13.

The return of Jesus Christ is one of the most significant and eagerly anticipated events in Christian theology. At a time known only to God, Jesus will descend from heaven, and all believers—both those who have died in Christ and those who are still alive—will meet Him in the air. This blessed hope instills in believers a sense of constant expectancy and motivates them to live godly lives, engage in sacrificial service, and participate energetically in the mission of spreading the Gospel. The anticipation of Christ's return serves as a powerful reminder that our current lives are temporary and that we are called to live in a way that honors God, looking forward to the day when we will be united with Him.

The Bible teaches that every human being who has ever lived will one day be raised bodily from the dead. This resurrection will result in two distinct outcomes: unbelievers will face judgment and condemnation, being consigned to eternal conscious punishment in hell, while believers will enter into eternal blessedness and joy. Matthew 25:46 underscores this truth, stating, "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." In the new heaven and new earth, Christ's Kingdom will come to full fruition as the redeemed, in gloriously renewed bodies, dwell with Him forever. Revelation 21:3-4 provides a beautiful depiction of this future, where God will dwell with His people, and there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. The redeemed will serve and reign with Christ, giving Him unending praise and glory throughout eternity.

While the overarching narrative of Christ's return and the final judgment is clear in Scripture, the specific details surrounding the end times have been interpreted in various ways by Christians throughout history. These interpretations include different views on the timing and nature of events such as the tribulation, the millennium, and the final judgment. Among these views are premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism, each offering a different perspective on how and when Christ's reign on earth will manifest.

Our church holds to the teaching position of historic premillennialism, a perspective that asserts Christ will return before a literal thousand-year reign on earth. This view is rooted in a particular interpretation of Scripture, especially Revelation 20, which describes a future period of tribulation culminating in Christ's second coming. According to this position, Christ will return to establish His millennial kingdom on earth, where He will reign with His saints in a restored and glorified creation. This reign is seen as a fulfillment of God's promises, bringing about a period of peace, justice, and righteousness where Christ's authority is visibly and universally recognized.

However, we also acknowledge and respect that within our church body, there are members who hold to a dispensational understanding of Scripture. Dispensationalism is a theological framework that typically emphasizes a clear distinction between Israel and the church, viewing them as two separate entities within God's overarching plan of redemption. According to dispensational thought, the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament remain distinct from those made to the church, and God has different plans and purposes for each. This view often includes a pre-tribulation rapture of the church, followed by a distinct period in which God resumes His dealings with Israel, leading up to the millennial kingdom.

While we appreciate the dispensational approach and its emphasis on the continuity of God's promises to Israel, we find it more consistent with the broader narrative of Scripture to see a greater continuity between Israel and the church. In our understanding, the church is seen as the fulfillment of God's promises, not in replacement of Israel but as the expansion of God's covenant to include both Jews and Gentiles. We believe that the New Testament reveals a unified people of God, where the distinctions between Jew and Gentile are transcended in Christ. The church, therefore, embodies the fulfillment of the promises given to Israel, as both groups are now one in Christ, heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:28-29).

At Village Bible Church, there is no membership requirement concerning adherence to a specific eschatological position. We welcome members from all eschatological backgrounds, whether they hold to premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism, or another view. Our unity is found in the shared belief in the return of Christ and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. The elders caution members to be kind and gracious in any debates or discussions surrounding the end of this age, recognizing that we all "see through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). While we hold to the position of historic premillennialism, we will, in our teaching, speak with charity about other positions that Christians affirm, ensuring that these discussions are marked by humility and a spirit of unity.

As we await this glorious day, we are called to live faithfully, engage in mission, and encourage one another with the hope of Christ's return, always keeping our eyes fixed on the promise that He is coming again.

MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the word "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4)

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest and the use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Village Bible Church as a local Body of Christ and to provide a biblical role model for both our own church members and the community, it is imperative that all members agree to and abide by this statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality, which is further developed in our distinctive entitled Marriage and Human Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22)

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, our church will recognize only marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Pastors, elders and staff members will participate in weddings and solemnize only marriages between one man and one woman. Additionally, the facilities and property of our church will host only weddings between one man and one woman. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11 We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31)

In a world where cultural norms and values are rapidly shifting, the issues of marriage, gender, and sexuality have become areas of significant contention. As society increasingly redefines these concepts, it is imperative for the church to stand firm on the clear teachings of Scripture. This is not just an issue of doctrine but of faithfulness to God's design for humanity. At Village Bible Church, we believe that these matters are crucial for clear teaching, discipleship, and the witness of the church. While many churches may choose to follow the winds of culture, we are committed to upholding what the Bible clearly teaches about marriage, gender, and sexuality.

According to Scripture, God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. This belief is rooted in Genesis 1:26-27, where God's creation of humanity in His image is described in terms of male and female. These two distinct and complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God, demonstrating the fullness of His design. Gender, therefore, is not a fluid or malleable concept but a divine gift that is intrinsically tied to our identity as bearers of God's image. To reject or attempt to alter one's biological sex is to reject the image of God within that person, an action that runs counter to the Creator's intention.

Marriage, as defined by Scripture, is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union. This definition is grounded in the creation narrative of Genesis 2:18-25, where God establishes marriage as a covenant relationship. The union of man and woman in marriage is designed not only for companionship but also as a reflection of Christ's relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32). At Village Bible Church, we uphold this definition of marriage, believing that sexual intimacy is a gift from God intended to be expressed only within the bounds of this covenant relationship. Scripture consistently affirms this standard, with passages like 1 Corinthians 6:18 and Hebrews 13:4 calling for the sanctity of marriage and sexual purity.

We also hold to the permanence view of marriage, believing that God's design is for marriage to be a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. This means that remarriage is not in keeping with God's intention, except in cases where a spouse has passed away or when a former spouse has remarried, thus releasing the other partner from the marital bond. We call all our members to the preservation of marriage, encouraging them to seek reconciliation and restoration whenever possible. The leadership at Village Bible Church is committed to equipping and resourcing our members to fulfill their lifelong commitments of matrimony, providing support through counseling, teaching, and community support to strengthen marriages.¹

¹<https://villagebible.church/divorce-and-remarriage-what-god-joins-together/>

In contrast to the biblical view, the culture often promotes a broad acceptance of various forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, and the use of pornography. However, Scripture is unequivocal in its condemnation of these practices, not just in external actions but also in the mind and heart. Passages such as Matthew 15:18-20 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 make it clear that these thoughts, desires, and behaviors are sinful and offensive to God. Our commitment to biblical teaching leads us to reject these practices in all forms—whether in mind, heart, or behavior—not out of animosity, but out of a desire to honor God’s design and to call people to the freedom and purity that is found in Christ.

To maintain the integrity of Village Bible Church as a local Body of Christ, it is imperative that all members agree to and abide by our statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. This commitment is not merely about adhering to a set of rules but about upholding a biblical role model for both our church community and the broader society. Jesus calls His followers to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:16), and part of that calling involves living in a way that reflects God’s truth, even when it contradicts cultural trends.

In accordance with our biblical convictions, Village Bible Church will recognize only marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. This belief is not a matter of preference but a conviction grounded in Scripture’s teaching. Therefore, our pastors, elders, and staff members will participate in and solemnize only marriages that align with this biblical understanding. Moreover, all marriages conducted within the church will be reserved for members who have affirmed these ideals of marriage, sexuality, and gender. Our church facilities and property will be used exclusively for weddings that adhere to this definition of marriage. Additionally, any marriages performed by our staff members outside of the church will always abide by these same guidelines, ensuring consistency with our biblical convictions.

While we stand firm on these convictions, we also believe in the power of God’s grace to redeem and restore. Scripture assures us that God offers redemption to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Acts 3:19-21 and Romans 10:9-10 remind us that repentance and faith in Christ bring about a new creation, a transformation that extends to all areas of life, including our understanding of sexuality and relationships. The hope of the Gospel is that no one is beyond the reach of God’s grace, and at Village Bible Church, we proclaim this message of redemption with compassion and conviction.

In all our dealings, whether in teaching, discipline, or outreach, we are committed to treating every person with compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Jesus’ command to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:28-31) and the call to treat others as we would want to be treated (Luke 6:31) guide our interactions with others. Even as we hold firmly to biblical truth, we are called to demonstrate the love of Christ, recognizing that every person bears the image of God and is deserving of dignity and respect.

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE.

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect and value all human life (Ps 139).

At Village Bible Church, we believe that all human life is sacred, created by God in His image, and therefore deserving of dignity, honor, and protection. This belief is foundational to our understanding of human worth, which applies to every person, from pre-born babies to the elderly, including those with physical or mental challenges. As Scripture teaches in Psalm 139, God forms and fashions each life with purpose from conception to natural death, making every human life of inestimable value.

Our belief in the sanctity of life is rooted in the understanding that God is the Creator of all life. Genesis 1:27 affirms that humanity is made in the image of God, and this divine imprint gives every person inherent worth. From the moment of conception, God intricately weaves us together, as reflected in Psalm 139:13-16, which declares that God "knit me together in my mother's womb." This sacredness of life is further highlighted by the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who demonstrated the value of human life through His sacrificial death and resurrection, offering redemption and reconciliation to God (John 3:16-17). As believers, we are called to treat our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, living lives that honor God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Romans 12:1).

Abortion: We believe that abortion is the taking of innocent life, a grave sin that destroys a life created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). This conviction encompasses any intentional termination of a viable pregnancy, including the use of abortifacient drugs. While the culture may allow for exceptions, we hold that every life is equally valuable. However, we also affirm that God's grace extends to those who have had abortions, offering forgiveness and healing through Jesus Christ. As a church, we support and care for those affected by abortion and those facing unplanned pregnancies.

People with Special Needs: We believe that all people, regardless of physical or cognitive abilities, are made in God's image and are of equal worth. Jesus often ministered to those with disabilities, demonstrating their value in God's eyes. At Village Bible Church, we are committed to supporting individuals with special needs and their families, affirming their dignity and worth as beloved children of God.

In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF): While IVF offers hope for couples struggling with infertility, it raises ethical concerns that must be considered carefully. We emphasize the sanctity of life from conception and encourage those considering IVF to reflect on the moral implications, particularly the potential destruction of embryos, which we believe are human lives with inherent worth.

End-of-Life Care/Euthanasia: We stand firmly against euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, believing that these practices violate the sanctity of life and God's commandment not to murder (Exodus 20:13). We trust that God, the author of life, alone has the authority to determine our days (Psalm 139:16). We advocate for compassionate end-of-life care that alleviates suffering while respecting the dignity of life.

Capital Punishment: We affirm that capital punishment, when applied justly, upholds the sanctity of life by addressing grave offenses such as murder (Genesis 9:6). However, we call for its fair and unbiased application, recognizing the dignity of all individuals, even those who have committed serious crimes. The use of capital punishment must be carried out with care, ensuring that justice is served without discrimination.

Suicide: Suicide is a tragic act that violates the sanctity of life. While it is a sin, we believe that those who belong to Christ are not beyond His grace, even in such moments of despair. Village Bible Church is committed to providing support and counsel to those struggling with suicidal thoughts, affirming their worth in God's eyes and offering the hope that is found in Jesus.

THE FINAL AUTHORITY FOR MATTERS OF BELIEF AND CONDUCT.

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind and is the sole and final source of all that we believe. The Guiding Elders, in light of the responsibility assigned to them by both Scripture and our church Constitution, are entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the church and bear the final responsibility for the church in the interpretation of Scripture and all other matters relating to spiritual oversight.

At Village Bible Church, we are committed to the belief that the Bible is the ultimate and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct. This conviction is not merely a point of doctrine but the very foundation upon which our church is built. The Bible, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, provides us with the definitive guidance on truth, morality, and how we are to live our lives. While our statement of faith outlines key aspects of what we believe, it is the Bible itself that holds the full measure of God's revelation to humanity. Therefore, whenever questions or challenges arise, we turn first and foremost to Scripture for answers, confident in its authority and sufficiency.

The task of interpreting Scripture and providing spiritual oversight for the church is entrusted to our Guiding Elders. This responsibility, as outlined in both Scripture and our church's Constitution, is not taken lightly. The Guiding Elders are charged with ensuring that all teachings, practices, and decisions of the church are in alignment with God's Word. However, this role is not carried out in isolation. The Guiding Elders work closely with our pastoral staff and shepherding elder teams, engaging in collaborative and thoughtful deliberation. This teamwork ensures that multiple perspectives are considered, and that the church's leadership is unified in its commitment to biblical fidelity.

We recognize the profound weight of this responsibility. Decisions made in the interpretation of Scripture and in the spiritual oversight of the church have far-reaching implications for the faith and practice of our congregation. For this reason, every deliberation is approached with deep prayerfulness and careful consideration. We seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our decisions, striving to faithfully represent God's truth and to shepherd the church in a way that honors Him.

In our commitment to the authority of Scripture, we acknowledge that it is not just a rulebook or a collection of teachings, but the living Word of God, active and relevant to every aspect of our lives. The Bible shapes our understanding of who God is, who we are, and how we are to live in relationship with Him and with one another. As a church, we are devoted to ensuring that all of our beliefs, teachings, and practices are rooted firmly in Scripture, and that we are faithful stewards of the truth God has entrusted to us.

Conclusion:

As we conclude this document, our intention has been to provide clarity and thoughtful commentary on the doctrinal statement that serves as the foundation of Village Bible Church. This effort is not meant to add to or detract from the biblical convictions that our statement of faith firmly upholds but to offer a deeper understanding of how these core beliefs apply to various aspects of our faith and practice. We recognize that theology can often involve complex and nuanced discussions, and it is our hope that this document will serve our members well, especially those who seek greater insight into the implications of our doctrinal positions.

By exploring some of the finer points of theological debate and the specific applications of our beliefs, we aim to equip our church family with the tools needed to navigate these discussions with confidence and grace. We believe that a well-grounded understanding of Scripture not only strengthens individual faith but also fosters unity and maturity within the body of Christ. It is our prayer that this document will help our members to engage more deeply with their faith, to grow in their knowledge of God's Word, and to live out these truths in their daily lives.

Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that Village Bible Church remains rooted in the truth of Scripture, standing firm on the solid foundation of God's Word while also providing a clear and compassionate framework for understanding and applying these truths in a complex and ever-changing world. We trust that this document will be a valuable resource for all who are part of our church community, guiding them in their walk with Christ and their participation in the life of the church.